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BUILDING BRANCHES

DUMP THE BOSSES OFF YOUR BACK

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Modern Anti-Union Sentiment and How to Combat it

By X389468

On May 7th, the Sacramento IWW local in coordination with the Young Democratic Socialists of America at UC Davis attended an anti-union event put on by the Davis College Republicans. The DCR had decided to invite conservative activist Rebecca Friedrichs — known primarily for bringing a case against her own teachers' union all the way to the Supreme Court in 2015 — to come and speak. Friedrichs's case also provided precedent for the Janus case a year later as it concerned fair share fees used by the teachers' union. "Fair share fees" are paid by nonunion workers in public sector workplaces that have business union representation. They are intended to eliminate freeloading, which occurs when nonunion workers benefit from union representation without contributing to the union themselves. The idea is that if nonunion workers don't pay dues yet still receive all the benefits of a union, other workers would follow suit, leaving the union en masse and causing it to collapse with no source of funding. The IWW does not use fair share fees and is thus virtually unaffected by these Supreme Court rulings, but the ruling is still part of the ongoing war against organized labor and thus important to address.

Once introductions were made and DCR members tore down the Sacramento local's pro-union poster stapled outside the room, Rebecca Friedrichs began her presentation. It quickly became clear that her issue with unions wasn't that she didn't believe workers had a right to band together to demand better working conditions — her issue with unions was that they did not serve as a megaphone for her particular political ideology. However, even this was not the traditional accusation that all union organizers are evil communists out to overthrow the United States government; Friedrichs's epithet of choice was "bully" rather than "socialist," and her fear of unions' politics wasn't that they had a secret alliance with the Communist Party but that they overwhelmingly donated to the Democrats. Even upon discovering that there were Wobblies in the room, her first impulse was to call us all bullies instead of making some snarky remark about communism. The popular left-wing interpretation of this turn of events would be that the political sphere has moved so far to the right that social democrats have taken the place of communists as the main threat to the American Way™ and actual socialism is so far outside the mainstream that to be a socialist is unthinkable. Thus, you get conservatives who accuse the IWW of being in the pocket of the Democratic Party (ha!).



Her argument more or less broke down into these points:

- Conservatives are bullied and punished by unions and union leaders for their ideological beliefs (a.k.a. bigotry).
- Liberals who overwhelmingly dominate unions want to force their ideology on children and others (a.k.a. tolerance and basic human decency).
- Unions have absolute power in the workplace and the only reason why the rank-and-file haven't been able to get what they want in bargaining is because the unions refuse to listen to the rank-and-file.
- Unions exist to protect their friends and will actively seek to protect harmful people from being fired and abandon "good" people because they hold different ideological beliefs.
- Non-union workplaces should exist in competition with union workplaces so people can have "choice."
- Children should not be taken to picket lines or strikes because it indoctrinates them with a particular ideology.
- Unions and union members who are liberals should not do activist work, but conservatives absolutely should do activist work.
- Unions should not have a national or international structure, but should instead exist on a local level because that's the only way you can have democracy.

The first thing that one should notice when looking at this list is the complete absence of any criticism of the boss or the corporation. A common tendency amongst anti-union individuals is to idolize the boss or the corporation and hold them up as a standard of success. To them, the boss is the one who did all the hard work and took on all the risk; the workers are just the people who are fortunate enough to have a job and risked nothing themselves. This is the modern version of the divine right of kings — those who have wealth are wealthy because they earned it, therefore those who do not have wealth did something to deserve their poverty. It is hard to break out of this mentality, especially since it's been fed to us all from birth. Fortunately, this argument is full of contradictions — the minimum wage worker works much harder than any CEO with a million dollar salary after all. A worker who professes that their boss deserves more pay because the boss "works harder" could be persuaded to believe otherwise if asked what exactly the boss does that makes their labor worth more than the worker's labor. If the worker manages to come up with an answer like, "Well, my boss started the business with their own money, so therefore they deserve more money," the corresponding response could be, "Sure, the boss owns the space and provides the tools and raw materials, but our boss doesn't do the work to make the business profitable. Why isn't the boss simply compensated for the cost of getting the raw materials for the business and us workers split the rest? You know, especially since the boss already has money like you said and our rent isn't going to pay itself." It is important to remember that one interaction alone is unlikely to change anyone's mind. However, with friendly persistence most folks can be brought around eventually. Demanding higher pay is in their best interest, after all.

The IWW is a radical union that wants to improve the lives of the entire working class and won't stop organizing and pushing for better simply because the boss has agreed to a union contract.

Furthermore, the issue with the boss isn't merely that they steal the fruits of our labors, but that they are petty tyrants who use the fear of starvation to beat us into submission. Working class people who are anti-union tend to make a lot of noises about freedom and liberty, meaning they should be more receptive to arguments about the undemocratic nature of the workplace — unless they are massive hypocrites, which is entirely possible. In this argument it's important to draw a distinction between the IWW and business unions. The freedom and liberty argument works against business unions because they have a massive administrative structure that is very undemocratic and notoriously corrupt. The IWW, on the other hand, is a decentralized union where each individual branch or shop can make its own decisions as long as it follows the IWW Constitution. Officers are elected by the part of the membership they oversee, and are subject to recall at any time if they do a bad job. Furthermore, the IWW is a radical

union that wants to improve the lives of the entire working class and won't stop organizing and pushing for better simply because the boss has agreed to a union contract. It's uniquely responsive to the working class because the IWW is only made up of the working class. There are no union bosses in the IWW. And since there are no union bosses, it's easier to draw a contrast between the democratic nature of the IWW and the dictatorship of the boss. In fact, the IWW's very existence as an organization disproves the idea that the working class isn't intelligent enough to be allowed control of their own work. It also proves that bosses aren't needed to keep society functioning. The IWW has managed to exist and keep organizing for 114 years despite heavy opposition from every direction. If the working class can manage that, we can do anything.

The trickiest aspects of modern anti-union sentiment are most likely the political and social connotations attached to union organizing. Unions have over time gained a reputation of being in the pocket of the Democratic Party or serving its interests. Because of this perception, some people who tend to vote Republican have become increasingly hostile to unions, viewing them as an ideological foe. This assessment conveniently ignores the fact that the Republican Party actively seeks to destroy unions and the Democratic Party does not - at least, not openly. Business unions overwhelmingly donating to the Democratic Party and unions overwhelmingly supporting Democratic candidates are survival strategies, if flawed ones. The IWW does not make political or anti-political alliances, but its association, historical and current, with socialism, communism, syndicalism, and anarchism would be considered suspect for those who are not already leftists. Fortunately, as its existence has been erased from collective memory, it's possible to ease someone into supporting the IWW simply by affirming it's a union which makes no political alliances whatsoever. Hopefully this allows the individual in question to examine the IWW's position without immediately (and wrongly) associating it with the USSR and refusing to listen to a word anyone says.

Ultimately, most anti-union sentiment comes from a lack of education on the origins and purpose of unions - and also centuries of capitalist propaganda that paints any challenge to the capitalist system as evil. Many anti-union people are under the impression that the union is an all-powerful institution the boss must bow down to, or that it exists to stifle the freedom of the rank-and-file. What they do not understand is that the boss is a dictator who would fire absolutely everyone in the workplace if they thought it would get them a greater profit and the union is a way for workers to try to level the playing field. Unions were formed out of necessity, not because someone thought it would be great to force everyone to pay union dues for unspecified "protection." Of course, business unions these days exist mainly to maintain the benefits their members already have and to make money for the business union's administrative structure; the IWW has, on the other hand, kept its original revolutionary goal of ending the wage system and eliminating all bosses forever. With the proper education, most people will support unions. It must be said, however, that an individual who is opposed to unions because they're not bigoted enough towards marginalized groups is unlikely to join the IWW - nor would we want them to. Bigotry has no place in the IWW, or anywhere.

Rebecca Friedrichs's presentation was ultimately informative, but also deeply frustrating. It demonstrates the effects of years of anti-union propaganda and a complacent labor movement. Rebecca Friedrichs and those like her see unions as a tool to promote their own political agenda rather than as organizations intended to protect the working class. Their ideal form of unionism (if they support any kind of unionism at all) is one where we return to the days of craft unions, each a tiny local specific to a certain skill - except this time the craft unions are only made up of members who are ideologically like-minded. There are very good reasons why craft unionism isn't practiced anymore, but the lesson would likely be lost on Friedrichs. Interestingly enough, when asked whether she would willingly join a union that did not make political alliances, was entirely democratic, and had low dues, Friedrich replied that she absolutely would - and then proceeded to call us bullies after we suggested that she should join the IWW. On the other hand, some of the attendees were less set in their ways than Friedrichs was. Perhaps one day they will come to realize that business unionism is not the only union model out there, and that even business unions are better than nothing at all - which is what Rebecca Friedrichs and those like her would reduce us down to if they had their way. In the meantime, we can help the work along by spreading word of the IWW and continuing to educate the working class on their own collective power ●

Report Back: Southern Regional Organizing Assembly

Originally published in the Southern Coordinating Committee blog: wobsouth.info

by Alec Shurtz

It takes thirteen hours to drive from Tampa to Richmond. It's not until we were approaching Gainesville that I remembered I get claustrophobic and panicky during car rides. We still had eleven hours to go.

Between the occasional break for restrooms, gas, and snacks, we listened to music and podcasts and sometimes put the audio on pause to talk about whatever four Wobblies in the South decide is interesting — the disgusting symbols of slavery or the high quality of the Revolutions podcast, for example. And I learned something important on that drive: if you want to put a carload of people to sleep, just play a podcast about Marxist political economy.



We arrived in Richmond at about 10:30pm and slid out of the car like four Vienna sausages: tired and soft and gross. Luckily, there was a large crew of people waiting to greet us in the lobby so our weekend started the moment we walked through the front door.

The first thing you should know about the Southern Regional Organizing Assembly is that we did the entire thing in a large hostel. It was a compound, really. All of our sleeping, eating, socializing, and meeting needs were met in one confined but well-furnished space. We probably should've been given matching jumpsuits but the Southern Coordinating Committee — the voluntary IWW organization that put this event on — just doesn't have that kind of budget.

From what we saw of it, Richmond is a gorgeous city, and the Richmond General Membership Branch was equally beautiful — a super-positive, outgoing bunch of Wobblies who were highly coordinated and on top of every detail. Jumpsuits aside, there wasn't anything we wanted that the GMB didn't provide. Someone was always staffing the registration/lit table, the food was awesome, and the space was great. The Richmond Wobblies can't get enough praise for being fantastic hosts.

Much of the weekend was spent talking about how to organize ourselves. The

presentations were largely interrelated and about how we can make our spaces safer, more accountable, and open to diverse opinions. Just like in real life, we had to get those pieces in place first before we could talk about organizing the working class.



Press Officer Liss Waters Hyde and I gave the first presentation Saturday morning, though it became less of a presentation and more of an informal chat about union communication strategies. Our goal was to establish the three most important things to know about the IWW and how we get that message out there. The discussion naturally featured a lot of general media tips like how to best utilize the various social media platforms, the strengths and weaknesses of each platform, when and how to write a press release, and how to encourage media coverage of our events.

This led into the next presentation where a journalist/organizer talked to us about the new Freelance Journalists Union. We watched an excellent video about the FJU and talked about the nature of forming a union across a wide geographical range among workers who don't share a physical workspace. If you're interested in learning more about the FJU, check out the interview with FJU organizers, published by IW.

Lunchtime, and the four Vienna sausages (one of whom insists on noting that he is soy-based) found ourselves walking up to our room at the same moment, with the same intention: sleep.

After this wonderful bit of respite, we ventured out, finished the remnants from lunch, and sat for Accountability and Survivor Support, our next discussion. The presenter told us this is typically done over a much longer time period than the two hours allotted, which makes a lot of sense considering the amount of information to unpack and digest. Support and accountability are vital issues to discuss and every branch should hold a training on the subject because the reality of the world we live in is that many men commit gendered harm or sexual violence.

After a break, the last presentation of the day was on the Sex Workers Solidarity Network of Hamilton, Ontario, which included general information about sex work, its legal struggles, and its revolutionary potential. It's a tough subject as it's upsetting to hear stories of violence against sex workers, but a necessary one to address and it definitely galvanized the audience into thinking about how we can help sex workers and build our own solidarity networks.

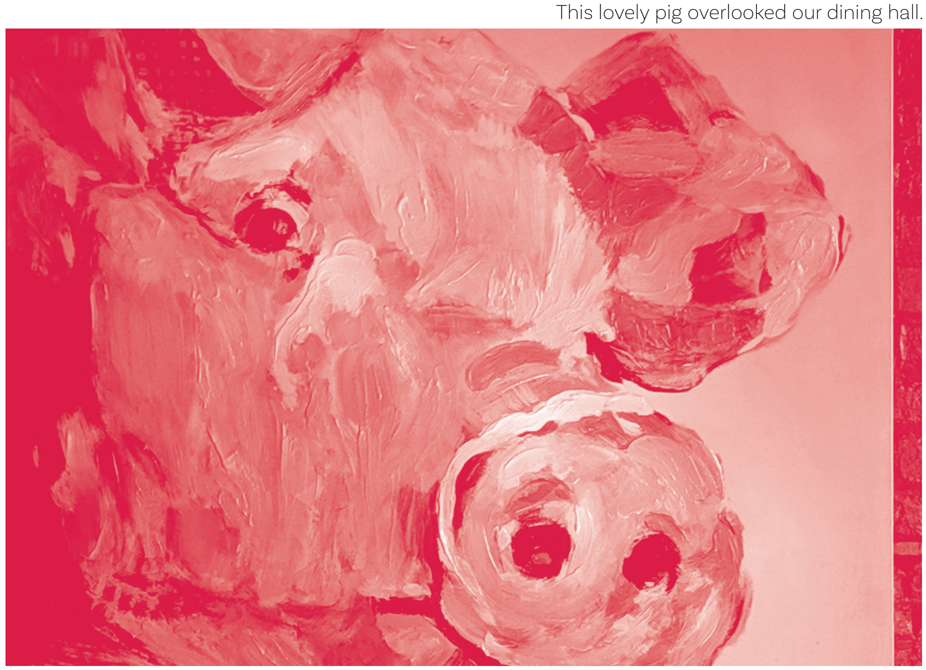
With the day officially over, the mood following these last few presentations was pretty down, so it was a great relief when someone suggested we take the fifteen-minute walk down to the James River. This trip was by far the highlight of my weekend, an all-

around beautiful experience. I know most IWW events result in everyone retiring to the nearest bar but I think from now on we should hold all post-event parties in the nearest swimmable location. For team building, of course. Though after that some of us still went to a bar.

The next morning I successfully convinced myself I wasn't hungover and we proceeded to try to cram all of the official SCC business into an hour. We ended up going forty minutes over but passed extensive bylaws revisions and I was elected Secretary-Treasurer (yay!). The bylaws revisions are a bit complicated, of course — not to mention boring — but we basically streamlined the decision-making body, creating a steering committee of delegates from GMBs and GDC/IWOC Locals and eliminated most officer positions, replacing them with chairs of committees who are allowed voice but not vote in official business. This will improve our ability to achieve quorum, makes the decision-making more representative, and frees committees to spend more time on their specific tasks rather than deliberating motions that might not apply to them. We also established a mechanism to declare vacancy of office and the election of new delegates or the appointment of a new Secretary-Treasurer. Lastly, we opened up the opportunity to make bylaws amendments outside our biennial gatherings, eliminating the two-year wait to make changes under the previous bylaws.

The last two presentations were on toxic masculinity and navigating conflict, subjects that seemed to complement each other naturally. These were detailed presentations, making them difficult to summarize, but the toxic masculinity talk first detailed what toxic masculinity is — how manhood is understood and communicated between men, and is typically defined by violence, sex, status, aggression, and socially-enforced stereotypes inflicted from birth. This was followed up with how to recognize toxic behavior among cis-men and how to prevent and confront it. These tactics include active inclusion, using progressive stack, the WAIT method (Why Am I Talking?), and the need to respect and center survivors. If your branch or local has the chance to take this training, do it now. I can't recommend it enough.

This lovely pig overlooked our dining hall.



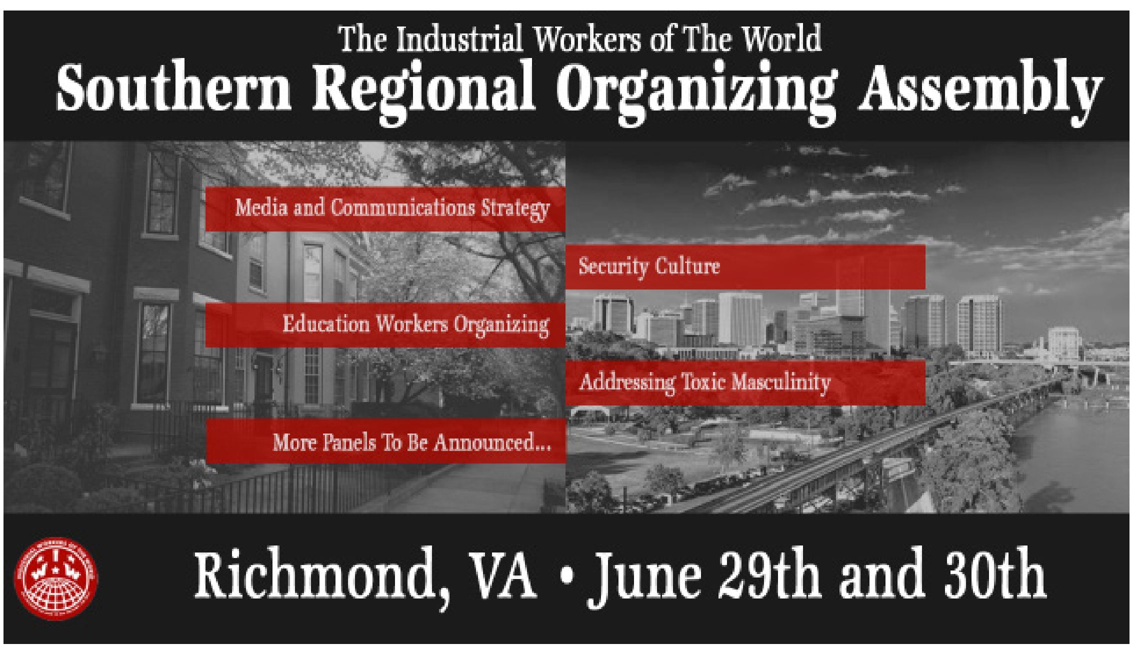
Sam from the Richmond branch, a doctoral candidate in social psychology, followed this talk with a presentation on navigating conflict in the union. Like most of the presentations, this one is best experienced in-person, since it details complex subjects that aren't easy to summarize. Sam explained that conflicts aren't something innate to the IWW and that we can mitigate these conflicts by outlining short-term goals we all share,

understanding our own cognitive biases, avoiding text-based platforms (where possible), not using absolutes like "always" or "never," and knowing when to take a step back and not respond to someone right away.

Finally, we broke out into our Industrial Union groups and spent the rest of the day plotting against the bosses. I can't speak for the other groups, but the education workers did some very thorough and detailed plotting. We developed a solid plan for how to begin organizing ourselves and our workplaces. I left feeling confident about organizing where I work and how to get specific demands from my bosses.

And that was the weekend. The observing delegation from the NYC GMB invited us to another swimming after-event — this time at a pool — but my fellow workers out-voted me and so the Tampa Bay group began our thirteen-hour overnight hell-ride back to swampsville.

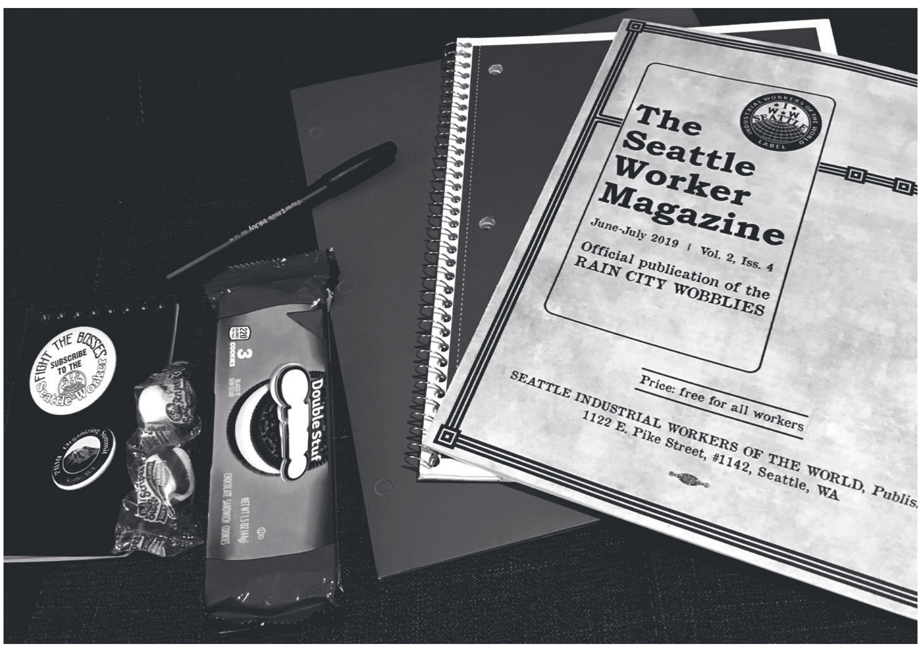
(Note to my Fellow Workers: I will always be mad about missing a pool party and I plan to hold on to this aquatic grudge forever. Some conflicts just can't be navigated.)



Report Back: Seattle Organizing Summit

by x331980

Thirty IWW organizers from across Canada and the US gathered in Seattle June 29-30 for the union's Organizing Summit. The meeting was put on by the IWW's Organizing Department Board and ably hosted by the Seattle General Membership Branch, a hotbed of Wobbly membership growth and workplace organizing. Wobbly organizers traveled to Seattle from far-off Tampa Bay, Baltimore, New York, Montreal, Edmonton, and Los Angeles, as well as nearby Vancouver, Portland, and San Francisco. The Summit's success is evidence of the growing emphasis on workplace organizing in the IWW: the 2016 Organizing Summit in San Francisco showcased only five active IWW campaigns, while the 2019 Seattle Summit featured well over a dozen.



Organizers from current campaigns by such well-known and public IWW unions as the Burgerville Workers Union (BVWU; Portland, Oregon), Stardust Family United (SFU; New York City), The Union of Workers and Self-employed Quebec (S'ATTAQ; Montréal, Quebec), and the Seattle GCI campaign (which abruptly ended when the shop, facing the union's imminent success, fled town last summer) met with others from over a dozen ongoing underground IWW union campaigns. The wide spectrum of industries represented included education, retail, health care, tech, messenger, gaming, and legal services.

Workshops at the two-day Summit included round-robin discussions of the pros and cons of NLRB elections and seeking recognition; developing support from the wider community; winning concessions from the boss and preparation for formal bargaining; meetings and decision-making in union bodies; labor law and filing (or not filing) Unfair Labor practice complaints; prioritizing shop floor grievances to increase chances of winning concessions; the role of external organizers; and ways to avoid burnout. In breakout sessions, shop floor organizers told of their campaigns and brainstormed with others for ways to deal with problems and exploit successes. Cheering erupted when direct actions which gained immediate concessions were described; everyone loved it when the union managed to put one over on the boss. There were shared groans at tales of things that went wrong— the worker

who blabbed, the worker who tried to negotiate a separate deal with the boss.

The Seattle IWW's formal "external organize" program was of particular interest. External Organizers (EOs) are workers with personal organizing experience assigned by the branch's Campaign Committee to advise IWW union efforts in other shops. The role of the EO is to educate and serve as a confidant and mentor for shop floor organizers who most likely have no previous union experience. External Organizers use a very different set of skills from shop floor organizers. EOs aren't on the shop floor and so don't have direct contact with all workers in the shop; they can only work directly with the shop's inside organizing committee. They can't carry out one-on-ones with workers, can't do the social mapping, and aren't on the scene when day-to-day decisions have to be made during the campaign.

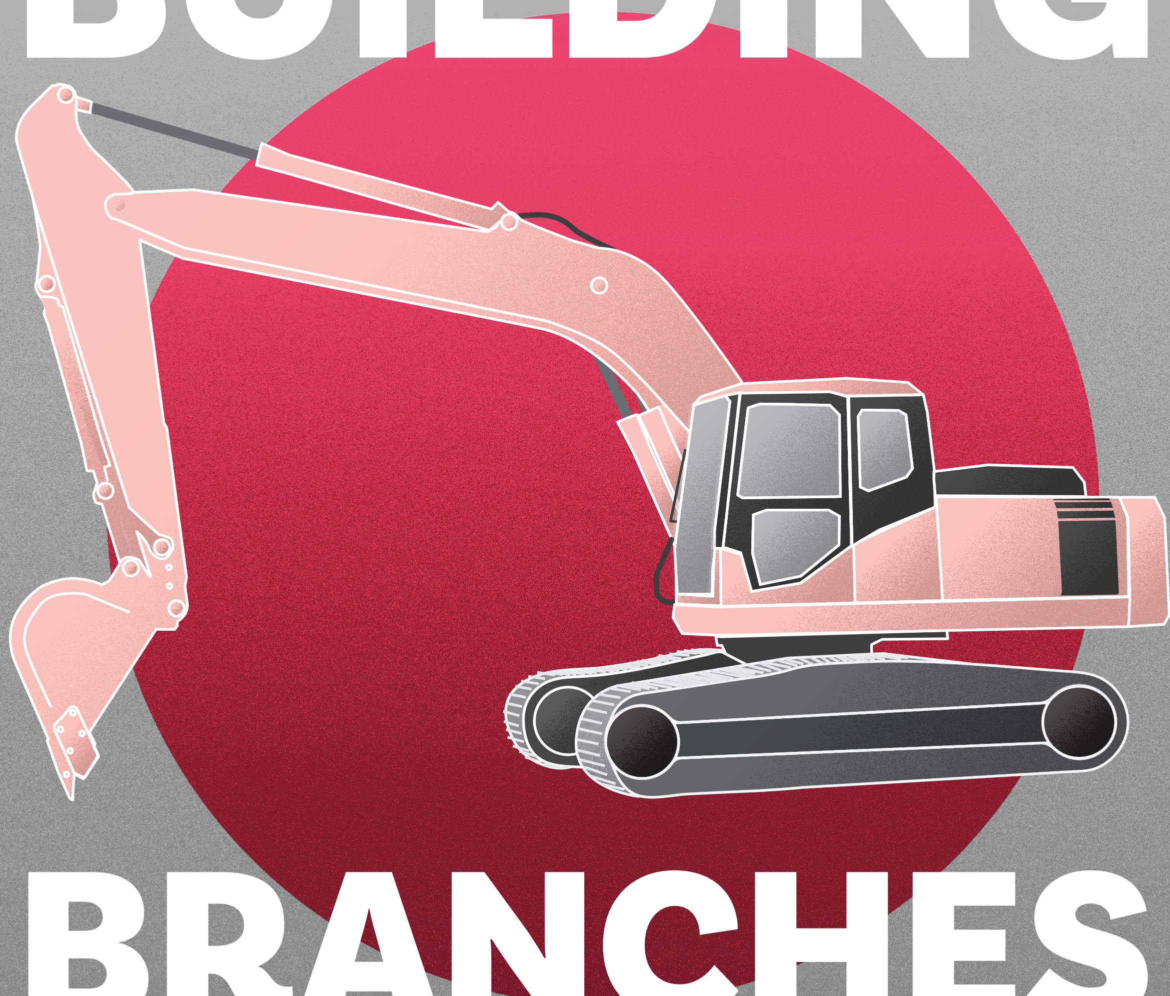


Several IWW members had direct experience as members of business unions. These Fellow Workers could favorably contrast the IWW's brand of "solidarity unionism" with the bureaucracy and general lack of rank-and-file participation in the approach mainstream unions have to organizing the workplace.

Consensus maintained that the North American Regional Administration could better support organizing in the union by providing more funding for Organizer Trainings (especially 102s), and especially for more frequent "Training for Trainers" workshops to provide the necessary instructors for Organizer Trainings. Campaigns and easily accessible translation services are also in urgent need of grants.

This was the finest gathering of Wobblies in this writer's decades of experience with IWW meetings. Participants were about equally split between men and women, with the LGBTQ community especially well-represented. Discussion was always respectful; laughter and applause were frequent; and good will was rampant. The cheerful socials on Friday and Saturday evening cemented bonds between new friends. Following a rousing and even somewhat on-key rendition of Solidarity Forever, the Summit's participants dispersed with a strong belief in our organizing model, hope for the IWW's future, and faith in our Fellow Worker's intentions. The Seattle Organizing Summit revealed the heart and soul of the IWW: worker-driven workplace organizing based on direct action

BUILDING BRANCHES



Sam West reflects on what it took to rebuild the Richmond, Virginia IWW

I moved to Richmond, VA in the summer of 2017 with my now-wife and Fellow Worker. Once we got settled and started meeting leftists in town the general word on the street was that the Richmond branch of the IWW was defunct. I felt that this might not be correct as the social media accounts for the branch were still active, but activity was sparse. Despite persistent messaging, I was ultimately not able to get a reply from the branch media or email accounts. It wasn't until I was wearing an IWW shirt to an event in town that someone approached me and introduced themselves as a Fellow Worker.

"Ah! I need to put you in touch with FW X!" they exclaimed.

Once I got in contact with the then-secretary I learned that, while the branch had dwindled in membership, it was indeed still active. A few weeks later we attended our first meeting and discovered the branch was about five people, well over a year behind in reports to General Headquarters, and in danger of losing its charter. I decided then it was a worthwhile task to do my part to rebuild the branch. At our next meeting I requested delegate credentials, which I was granted, which allowed me to begin recruiting and rebuilding the branch. I was later elected as branch secretary, a term that just ended for me, and am currently the communications officer of the Richmond GMB.

In what follows, I detail some of my experiences and observations from the past year and a half of rebuilding the Richmond GMB, which now sits close to sixty members, has broad appeal in the community, and contributes to local struggles. Through this mode of building the branch, we've hosted two fully-packed Organizer Training 101 sessions; hosted the second biennial Southern Regional Organizing Assembly; assisted a city-wide stripper strike; developed workplace campaigns in multiple industries; raised thousands of dollars in support of striking and incarcerated workers; engaged in impactful mutual aid and anti-racist organizing; and — perhaps most importantly — have built a culture of care around the branch.

I'm very proud of my work with the IWW and Richmond GMB, but must make clear that it would not have been possible without my many FWs in the branch and those who mentored me as I embarked on learning how to run a branch in the first place.

Okay, enough about me. On to the good stuff -

Branch building is not the same as base building, but base building will build the branch.

The left loves to talk about the ever-elusive "base building." Hip, older leftists will often snarl at anything they deem other-than base building — and this is often not unwarranted. The "Trump bump" saw a good deal of adventurism and macho personalities end up involved in the left, often motivated by the rush of engaging in mass action rather than a dedication to the long game of building worker's power. Despite such criticisms, these same voices often fail to engage in base building themselves in favor of branch or party chapter building.

While branch building is certainly a noble pursuit, it is not the same as base building. First, branch building often starts by speaking to other leftists in one's area. This is a safe and totally reasonable tactic — if you're ever going to truly base-build, it might be easier if your organization's local branch isn't five people in a public library (not to disparage any branches that look like this obviously; this is where we're coming from). But too much of simple branch building also comes with a major downside: it can turn the branch into an echo chamber. This echo chamber quickly becomes insular, growing so loud with meta-comments, inside jokes, and ironic memes (that newbies won't understand are ironic) that it turns prospective new members off from joining the branch.

Base building, however, is an entirely different animal. In this context, base building generally refers to building a base of support, within your city or region, of working-class people not currently involved in the political or activist scene. When thinking of base building, imagine a moment in the future where your branch is well established. When you find yourselves engaged in a seriously tense public struggle against a boss, who outside of the local leftist circles will readily support you, even if just on social media? That is your base.

Proper base building takes much more time and effort than branch building and can at times seem antithetical to branch building, but it isn't! Base building involves putting in real work and building genuine connections to people and their communities

with no strings attached. In other words, if you're really interested in the task of base building, then any material or other assistance you offer must be totally unconditional. If the person who has reached out to you for help doesn't want to give you their email address, phone number, or even hear about your amazing 20,000 word polemic on the modern Marxist whateverthehell, help them anyway.

In fact, it is best practice to not mention any of the above the first time you're interacting with a person unless they openly state their interest. Just relate to them on the basic, most human levels; start with the weather or local sports if you are struggling to find a topic. I know it seems cheesy, but it works. It is absolutely crucial that your potential base sees you for who you are — just another working-class person who wants their family and everyone else to be taken care of — before they see who you as an angry radical.

I detail three specific strategies here that have been the most impactful in rebuilding the Richmond branch.

Strategy no. 1: Provide a Service

One potential way to engage in base building is to provide a service to your community that meets the above-mentioned criteria (e.g., is unconditional). I caution that it's extremely important to do your homework before jumping into such a program. You must consult with members of the community you seek to provide said service to. In other words, find out what people need first.

One of the first initiatives the Richmond branch recently instituted was the "Bad Boss Tipline," a voicemail box and accompanying web form that anyone could call to report their boss to the IWW. While we were still quite a small branch at this time, we reasoned that this would at the very least give folks a listening ear – a place to call when no one else gave a damn about how their boss was treating them. It seemed like a no-nonsense thing to me at the time — let's just put this out there and see if people call us! The tipline was initially received with mixed enthusiasm by Wobblies outside of the branch (and a few within it). Indeed, I was told by more than one FW on social media that they had tried something similar and it was a waste of time. While this sucked to hear, we pressed on and kept hanging up flyers sharing content about it on social media – and then the calls started.

I was (and still am) the primary curator of calls to the tipline. Every single person that called us and left valid contact information was then contacted by me personally. There were many cases where these folks had already left their jobs and were seeking recourse for wrongful termination or something else that had happened at work. While we didn't have much to offer outside of advice in either case, people still seemed to be helped by having a caring ear to tell their troubles to, someone to reaffirm that yes, your boss is an asshole and your worth as a person isn't tied to your productivity.

In other cases, folks were still employed and there were directly actionable things we could do or teach them to get the ball rolling on organizing efforts. Some of these developed into (still private) campaigns and ultimately did build the branch. By my count, the tipline has brought no less than eight members into the branch and was the source of our biggest current campaign.

"We hurt because you hurt and we're mad because you're mad."

Strategy no. 2: Get Involved With Local Struggles

In the summer of 2018, a black middle school teacher named Marcus-David Peters was in the midst of a mental health crisis. The police were called when he was seen running along the side of the interstate completely nude. The responding officer fatally shot Marcus despite openly acknowledging his mental state, as heard on the bodycam footage. Members of the community and Marcus's family came together to build a strong and lasting movement called "Justice and Reformation" calling for community oversight (among many other badly needed reforms) to the Richmond police. This first community meeting following Marcus's death was somber and difficult to attend, but when his sister spoke, she spoke incredible truth. We rallied behind this movement and joined them in the streets the following week, forming a critical mass outside of the Richmond police department in the middle of a downpour and forcefully demanding what Marcus needed so badly that day — help, not death.

In December 2018 we were contacted by members of the local Virginia Education Association (a state affiliate of the National Education Association) via the bad boss tipline. They were planning a mass walk-out and march on the capitol building here in Richmond with public school teachers from all over the

state, and wanted to know if we could help. I spent the next few weeks in conference calls and Skype meetings with the folks at the core of organizing this event — a caucus group of more ambitious VEA members known as Virginia Educators United. We were able to produce literature in the form of trifolds distributed during the action and were invited into one of the middle schools in Richmond to film a short documentary which was published immediately following the march. We are currently in the process of filming more to produce a longer version that will be circulated at the beginning of the fall semester. In addition to this, some members of the VEU and other education workers have since joined the branch, leading to IU 620 quickly becoming our most-populated IU grouping.

While there are certainly other examples of our involvement in local struggles in the Richmond community, these two particularly powerful experiences were most relevant to the question of base building, because they sit at important intersections of the struggles against capital and white supremacy. They are also intrinsically linked to the things every working-class person cares about the most: the health and safety of their communities. The one-on-one process that we teach in OT 101 requires that we reflect genuine empathy for the pain and suffering of the workers we engage with. As such, our involvement in community struggles must, too, reflect this principle — we hurt because you hurt and we're mad because you're mad. Such values are also central to generating a culture of care from within the branch, such that each member of the branch has the same potential opportunities afforded to them by union membership.

Strategy no. 3: Building a Culture of Care

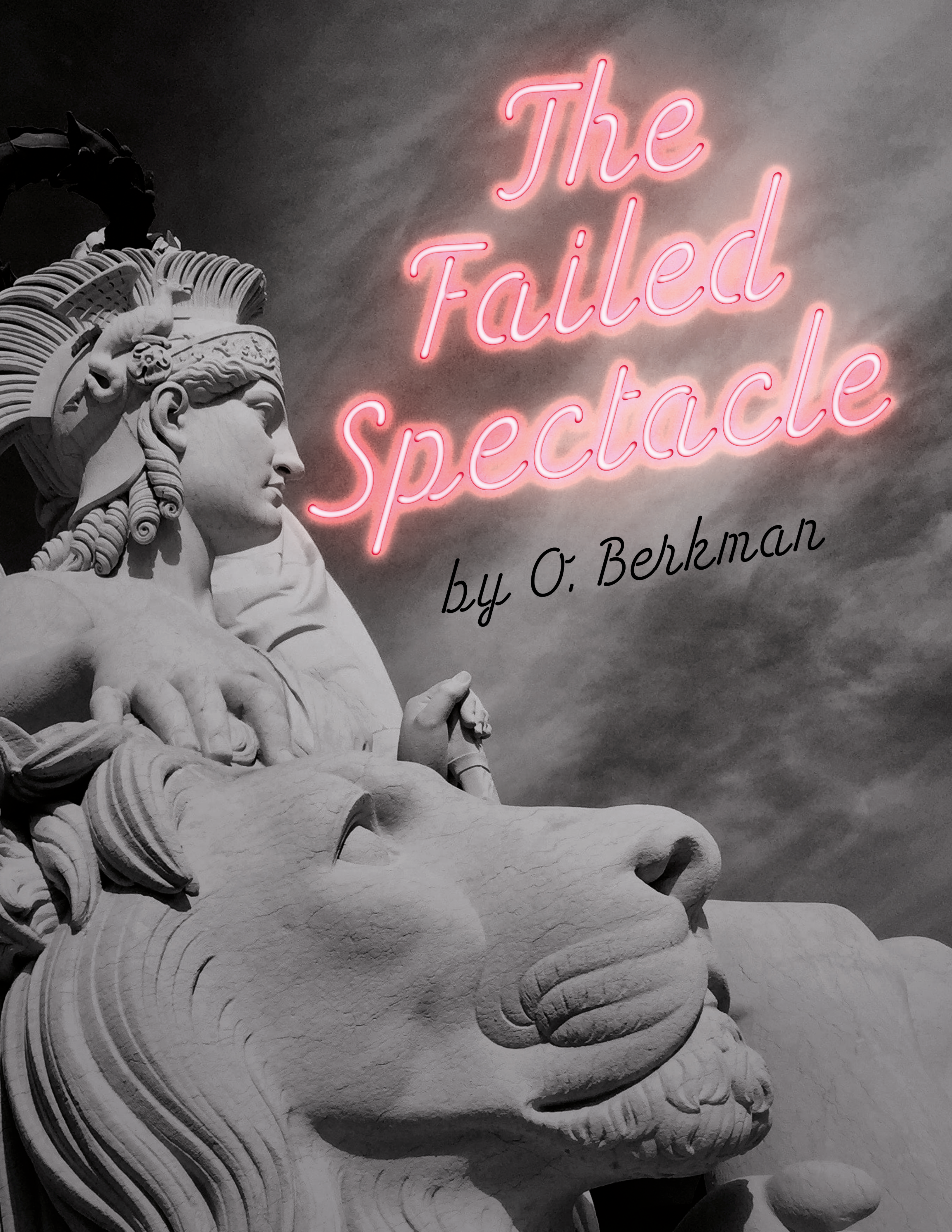
By "Culture of Care" I'm speaking to some mushy-feely stuff that might feel weird or uncomfortable, kind of like watching Marianne Williamson talk for any period of time. Sit with the feeling for a second and try to pretend like it isn't aversive when I say this — during my tenure as secretary I told everyone in the branch I loved them during my good and welfare turn at the end of each GMB meeting. Now this may feel cheesy and perhaps even inconsequential; after all saying 'I love y'all' once a month is just three words. But what if even just one person in the room hadn't had anyone tell them they loved them that month? And so what if that wasn't the case anyway? This small gesture never started out of any intentional effort — I just did it once. Then I kept doing it, because it was and still is true — I love my branch. I don't know that this one behavior of mine had any real impact on the culture of our branch, but it certainly couldn't have hurt.

I get the general vibe from most in the branch that the feeling is mutual to some extent — we do our very best to take care of one another. We place an emphasis on supporting one another in any way that we can, which has the effect of modeling these behaviors as social norms for new members, perpetuating this culture further. Being a hardened union militant doesn't (and shouldn't) preclude being a lover — especially in the case of our Fellow Workers.

For all her bizarre and downright nonsensical positions, Marianne Williamson is actually kind of right about this — capitalism has bred an utter loathing of life in each of us. It is part of our struggle against the capitalist system to find that joy again — to love and be loved. If anything, it drives the wealthy nuts to know that we can be happy without their greed and money. It makes them absolutely sick; our potential for happiness in spite of the various forms of oppression we experience is an existential threat to the upper class precisely because it invalidates their entire world view.

In closing, I hope this reflection can serve as a sort of springboard for branches looking to try some new things that may aid base building efforts and, thus, branch building. I am no expert in union building and am just now rounding my third year in the IWW, but I do know that we have achieved some degree of success and that the suggestions made in this piece are accurate representations of what led us to this point. I encourage others to try versions of the ideas that worked for us, but urge a need to reflect on how to best alter these suggestions to fit the needs of you community and branch. I also must underscore how important I believe the culture of care to be at the branch and union-wide level. If we can begin to make the IWW a space of healing on the inside it will be transformed into a fierce machine on the outside, one fueled by collective dreams of the world we wish to build ●




The Failed Spectacle
by O. Berkman

"We know we're not going to get it."

"Well, yeah, the conditions aren't there..."

"But it doesn't matter, we're going to build a base this way."

I can't tell you how many times I've had a variation of this conversation. Maybe it's about a petition folks are circulating, maybe it's about the effectiveness of locking yourself to a tree to stop a development, maybe it's about taking some trashy work of capitalism and the state through the courts — but every single time it goes this way. Hand in one more petition, click shut another lock, file another intervention, and make sure you get the email of everyone who supports what you're trying to do and look nice for the cameras.

This is about the politics of spectacle — a complex idea rooted in the Situationist theory developed by Guy Debord but, for the purposes of this article, it can be distilled into the idea that politics should be fought through mass communication methods. There are many kinds of spectacle the centre-left employs to keep us from organizing towards firm, long-term goals that can actually inspire people. This is the politics of Greenpeace, social democratic parties, and a politics that all too often creeps into more radical circles via those trained well by NGOs and parties in earlier years.

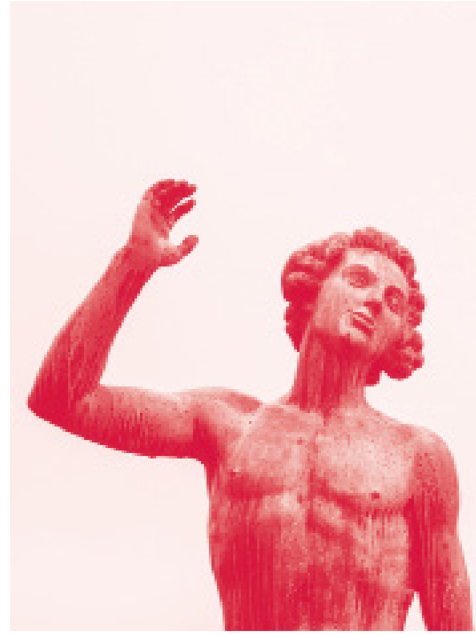
The Cost of Politics by Petition

I recently had this conversation in regards to 15 and Fairness, a campaign that relies on petitions and changing the mind of Canadian premier Doug Ford, a populist conservative with ties to the evangelical Christian side of the far right. This campaign is particularly focused on getting (and keeping) various labour law reforms, including an increased minimum wage in Ontario. The government of Doug Ford has since moved to undo these changes after his recent election. With the reality of Ford's politics on the ground, sources privately admitted that the immense effort they were putting into this campaign was essentially useless for the issue itself. However, what they aimed to do was build a base of support for other actions.

While this certainly seems understandable at first glance, one has to wonder: couldn't we find ways to do this without lying to energized people? Those involved with the campaign are led to believe that these tactics will have the strength to shame the government into action. While this can work on rare occasions, it's usually because there is already an openness to consider multiple possibilities. The Ford government is not such a place. Change will not come from a kind suggestion or a written scroll of names. And organizers know this.

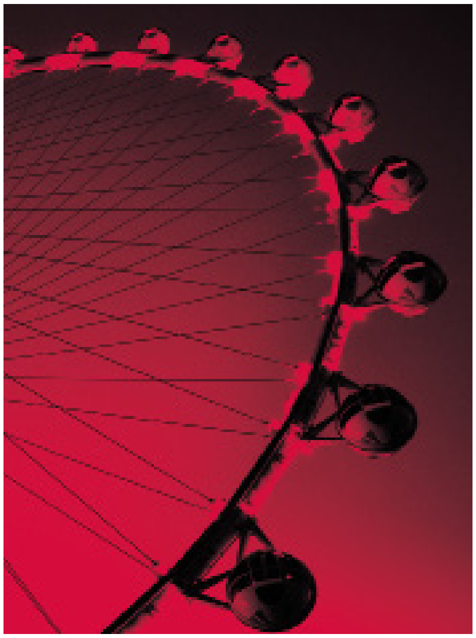
So what happens when things fail? Some will be convinced that it is an unexpected act of a pernicious government and get angrier than before (some say this is the point). But others will walk away deflated, especially newer people who will drop away and leave with the belief that organizing is a road to failure.

This too is a form of spectacle: we go through all these motions because it seems just but either we know nothing will change or are misled to believe that it will and eventually we become



disenchanted. The emails collected in such a campaign inevitably get added to a listserv where they will ask for donations to their causes or ask you to click like on a Facebook page, or invite you to a poorly planned march to a usually closed government office. Inevitably, this redirection of effort has less to do with appearances of militancy and more so with streamlining those who do stick around into ultimately dead-end projects like social democracy.

Be it through social democratic parties or labour unions or non-profit organizations, all of them line up along the lines of social democratic ends to pair with these bland means. As a politics with the facade of socialism and the heart of capitalism, social democracy loves to prey on our movements and extract what value it can: a new canvasser for your elections, a new bureaucrat to sit in the massive union office, a new donor to keep you rolling month-to-month. But as we'll see, this doesn't just stop with words and writing—even our revered direct action can be monetized by these forces.



3 Million Euros Can't Buy You A Future.

For a (thankfully) short time, I worked for Greenpeace Canada. People who'd worked there before me warned of the pace and how expectation for fundraising was higher than ever before. Greenpeace was pressuring their workers because they blew 3.8 million euros on currency speculation.

The mindset of Greenpeace typifies that of countless environmental nongovernmental organizations, but also relates a central problem with their model: the generation of profit takes centerstage to operations. how does such a heart of an organization (and organizing model) not also become reflected in the tactics and means of an organization?

Non-violent direct action has been used with positive outcomes in history and cannot be dismissed, but if we consider the groups that currently generate a lot of the workshops, tools, and methods around non-violent direct action (like Greenpeace) we start to see similar patterns: spectacle-driven actions for public goals that are known to be destined to fail, while members are privately recruited and driven to join the member base. The added layer here is that in the ENGO-space, such recruitment is then diverted into the engine of profit-generation. This generation of activism-capital creates a cycle where members are recruited, milked for their well-meaning liberal and social democratic dollars, while the funds mostly go to risky capitalist ventures (like the aforementioned currency speculation) or to making those upper-level folks a bit more cash.

ENGOs and other groups apply this same principle: taking a thin plastic wrapper of social struggle to gloss over their desire for a happier face to capitalism claiming to be engaging in struggles for justice. These social democratic machines are indistinguishable from each other in how they affect social movements. Each group demobilizes folks from organic organizing and towards their internal recruitment cycle. Each demobilization is based on mistruths and misleading presentation that inevitably breeds a more jaded approach or disillusionment with organizing all together. Each group — in tactic and means, at least — maintains social democratic order: that of a happier take on capitalism, a milder form of resistance, and an actual paralysis when faced with deeper threats.

The 'Stars' Lead Us To The Mouth Of Hell

There's a training program for activists that teaches that you can "build" an activist, that if you do the right media training and build up energy the right way, you'll be an activist, as if such a term is another degree to grant, rather than a thing we do. The classy NGO socialists who run these and other initiatives all end up reinforcing the aforementioned social democratic order with some becoming part of their party machinery. While these electable, self-declared radicals are inevitably shown to not really be seeking to build a new world but to facilitate the facades of the old one, the rot of social democratic tactics that they teach and profess still grows consuming space that could be used for substantive organizing.

Out of spaces that have been turned into ENGO-style training centers come these eventual politicians, but also those who wear the clothes of farther-left organizers. One tactic of non-violent direct action requires individuals place their bodies on the line for the repressive state to martyr. It's clear that these tactics can work if there is a willing audience to stop and listen (think of folks stopping a clear-cut). Actual workers there — unless driven otherwise, ideologically — have no desire to murder folks attempting to stop it. There is a possibility to change minds, or at least stay hands from actions.)

But if NVDA tactics require a willing audience to impact, then why do we see it utilized again and again in struggles for justice against the repressive apparatus of the state? Police, unlike functionaries and workers, are much less likely to break from their orders. So then, for the sake of spectacle, genuine organizers are convinced to put their bodies on the line, to take their licks from the police and state, and for what? A spot on the evening news? And while some of these things result

unexpectedly like when a police or state response is simply unprepared, the kinds of NVDA that is often practiced (at least in so-called North America) is designed to create this kind of peril.

So instead of avoiding criminalization, we incentivize our movements to aim for spectacle and increase the likelihood of becoming criminalized. There is little depth to this kind of organizing, as they create a cycle similar to that of the ENGOs: possible organizers are pulled into a recruitment cycle, each one of these recruits is sold on the notion that the ends they seek will be met through these means, but—in addition to folks becoming jaded or burnt out alone — they are soon taken up into the legal system. Not because they actually hit the state, capital or repressive forces hard, but instead for the sake of generating media attention. Then, there are one of two outcomes: 1. While their recruits are faced with the wrath of the state, the proponents of this kind of action reap the gains of attention, media-time, and spectacle; 2. The proponents join their recruits in facing the repercussions of the state, but spin this towards social credit and capital. Either way, rather than serving as a generator for actual capital, social capital for the stars of the movement grows.

Ultimately, as long as the scrape isn't too bad, the stars that propose sacrifice for spectacle continue forward. They position themselves as the elder statesperson of the movement and make their risks-for-spectacle ideals not just a valid tactic, but the most noble of them. When others raise concern about the timeliness or effectiveness of such tactics, those others are either ostracized from their fellow organizers or hushed by collective social pressure into silence before something can be done. Worst still, it is a common occurrence that outside of the orbit of these stars, whole groups will disagree and things will still proceed as these star-figures desire not because of their direct influence in the organizing circle, but due to fears of falling afoul of their influence.

The door revolves quickly. Social democratic figures build new ENGOs and wrap themselves in veneers of political edginess. Environmental organizations pair those who sling petitions with those who engage in ends-averse NVDA. Movement stars pop in for an ENGO role or abandon their so-called comrades to run for a social democratic party. Those who don't get drawn into becoming these figures themselves grow more and more weary — losing hope that either good actions or ideas can win the day. All the while social capital is built for our movement-stars and the movements themselves dissipate—the central social democratic order is maintained while our own spaces are left to rot.

So, What Is To Be Done?

There's no good in getting arrested for appearance's sake,it just deprives one more set of hands that can organize. While it is inevitable that we will be faced with police repression and iron bars in organizing, we should avoid the spectacle tactics of our so-called guiding stars and speculators like Greenpeace. Moreover, even beyond these tactics alone, we have to recall that even less dangerous tactics founded on the basis of 'base building' can demobilize potential organizers and burn out our potential to grow. And frankly, we just need to be more honest. Honest about the risks of an action. Honest about the ends that we can realistically seek if using a particular set of tactics. Honest about what we actually want as organizers and groups: do we want actual change or a refreshed, friendlier capitalism?

If we do want actual change we need to invest ourselves into actual forms of concrete, long-term, unglamourous organizing. This isn't to say we can't respond to specific issues, events, and actions—as this would be entirely in conflict with any notion of anti-fascism and community defence. But If we really want to develop a better world, it cannot appear suddenly and without slow effort. This is not to say we must commit to further investment in gathering only crumbs from the state, but instead that we must build alternative structures to the state's and complement that with our militant community defence and education.

I believe strongly in not just building our workplace organizations, but also investing in political and social organizations that work on a multitude of fronts to undermine our dependence on the state while we build towards revolution and insurrection. While we do this, we need to keep our eye out for those who would bring social democracy into our spaces. It is the role of committed socialists,anarchists, communists, and others to hold fast and build to a better world, a real world beyond capitalism and the state built from a movement based in truth and militancy •

Interview: South Sound General Education Union

By Jason Koslowski

This past February, the South Sound General Education Union appears to have won its first campaign: administrators at Evergreen State College are no longer filling a vacant campus police officer position, and are hiring two new faculty members. Evergreen State is a small liberal arts college in Washington State, with a total enrollment of about 4,000 students. Jason Koslowski interviewed a member of the SSGEU, Syndi, for their perspective on the campaign.

What is the South Sound General Education Union?

The South Sound General Education Union is a union to encompass pretty much anyone in education, ranging from pre-K to higher education. That includes faculty and staff, but we also include students in our union, which is a pretty big part of our success, actually.

So you consider students to be education workers?

Yes we do. We consider them to be part of the wider working class, even though students generally are not making a wage as students in the United States. They are basically doing work. They're working sometimes thirty to forty hours a week, training to be workers of some kind. And even if they may not be producing any commodities, they are becoming workers. And that's a really important area to organize, too.

I'm also thinking about how, just by showing up to class, doing assignments, joining student groups, etc., they're doing the work of constantly legitimizing, building up, and sustaining the school. But how did South Sound General Education Union start out? Could you say a word about that early history?

The organizing began late March of last year, about a year ago. Essentially, it was a few people that were really inspired by the West Virginia teachers' strike and then the [other] teacher strikes that followed. That teacher strike, to me personally, was one of the most inspiring things I've seen in my life.

And some of us, we thought it was actually possible to organize education industrially, as an industrial union, rather than organizing it by craft. So a group of us started meeting up and making plans for a union.

On a campus there are lots of kinds of workers, some of them in tension with each other. When you were starting out, where did you find a "foothold"? Was it with students, or teachers, or campus staff workers? And what were some of the major challenges of bridging different kinds of workers?

The most interest was with the people who were unorganized on campus, like students. We don't have a real student union at Evergreen. It was actually very hard to get a lot of faculty on board, because, one, they're already in a union, and two, even that union was hard to organize. Because the school says, "Hey, we're a progressive college. We give you all these tools to teach freely. You don't need a union." So it was really hard for that union to come together with us.

In terms of faculty — honestly, it's hard to organize them, because when they teach, they're not really seeing students as equals. I also think that's due to the material position of a lot of faculty. With the job market in that craft being really cramped, and the material well-being that some of them get, they don't want to risk repression.

I think it's worth noting that adjuncts at Evergreen generally get paid 90% of the salary that the tenured faculty gets, which makes them unusually hard to get on board. It's been easier to get other workers on board — I mean the janitors, the cafeteria workers, all of them — because they're not taught to see students as below them in some way.

One group we've been building relationships with is staff workers that are paid a wage, like janitors, who are organized

A lot of it is just having one-on-ones, just building relationships with people, and over time agitating them using the AEIOU style (agitate, educate, inoculate, organize, unionize).

by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. In fact, last month they did a march on the boss with thirty of them. We brought five of our members to that action. One of us got in contact with a rank-and-file member who was spreading the word about the action. We showed up for that march on the boss. I mean, they were way less antagonistic to the admin than we were, but the wage workers were not compensated for the snow days and they did a march on the boss to get compensation, which is huge for a union like AFSCME. We partook of that action, and we built relations through there.

For other staff workers, a lot of it is just having one-on-ones, just building relationships with people, and over time agitating them using the AEIOU style (agitate, educate, inoculate, organize, unionize).

Are there any differences between organizing on campus and how organizing is taught in the IWW's Organizer Training 101? I mean: mapping relationships in the workplace, doing one-on-ones with co-workers, and generally using the "AEIOU" model? Do these same principles apply?
The OT 101 strategy is crucial. Absolutely crucial. The OT 101 strategy in general is good for getting people on board with a union, period.

Can you briefly take us through the struggle? What happened?
Basically what happened was this. One of the departments, the political economy department, taught a lot of Marxism and things that are very critical of capitalism. Evergreen used to have a really thriving political economy department, but they had been negligent in hiring political economy faculty. Not only that, but budget cuts were happening around this time.

This is a tangent, but I think an important one. Enrollment has been dropping since 2010. [It] dropped between 2010 to 2017, [and then dropped by] that same amount between 2017 and fall of 2018. Because in the summer of 2018, they cut over twenty positions, primarily in the arts.

So we decided to use this first campaign to build the union. We made it clear that enrollment significantly dropped because a lot of core programs of the college were not there. We found out the police budget was 1.6 million dollars. And even though there are a good amount of people on campus who, sadly, like cops, there's also a really strong presence that does not like cops, luckily. A good amount of people are skeptical of them. So before we did a first rally, we posted propaganda all around campus. And we decided to go pragmatic. Go in a way that is accessible to people who are centrists. One of the most popular pieces was this piece talking about the twenty positions that were fired while the school tried to hire another cop. We basically said, "Instead of hiring a cop, who is paid more starting salary than a faculty member, we demand that the school hires two full-time positions, one in political economy and one in the arts."

Because of this campaign, we managed to build a pretty decent-sized base and get some workers down with the union. We agitated those workers into organizing their section of their shops.

Then we did a rally. We got over a hundred people — quite a few people from the community as well. We did a demand delivery inside the office of the president and provost. That gave quite a scare to them. There have been quite a few demand deliveries organized by leftists in Olympia since late 2017, but that was probably the biggest one as of lately.

Why do you think that that rally was the biggest one?
We flyered the campus heavily, and we handed out flyers directly to people. Because you can't ignore them as you're going to hand them something.



How were the demands crafted for the campaign? There was a positive demand — hire two new full-time faculty members — paired with a negative one: no new cop position. Was that on purpose, to help get numbers out and mobilize a base of support?
Yes. Because you're reaching out to two different kinds of demographics in Olympia that really could use organizing. In terms of getting rid of the cops, there's a good amount of people with anti-cop views, which is good. But a lot of them don't really have a positive program. They are pretty much against things but not really for things. And then you have people that don't really have much of a negative program at all, but they definitely have a positive program: "Hey, we should have more faculty." We were able to get these demographics to come together through these demands. That allowed for a pretty big turn-out.

What tactics did the administration use against the campaign?
After the rally and demand delivery, the admin tried to meet with one of the faculty who was openly in favor of the union, and even spoke at our rally. They tried to negotiate with him first. But then, two days before the meeting, the provost invited the head of finance, the head of outreach, the head of students, the head of faculty, a steward of the faculty union, and the head of the student government — trying to intimidate him. But we convinced the provost to allow for one other member of the General Education Union to attend the meeting. And we brought another [third] person without asking.

And they were not able to get us to agree to anything. Because we have a democratic structure of decision-making, so we couldn't agree to anything on the spot. And they were highly intimidated because it was five of them — as in, top admin — versus three of us. And the steward of the faculty union was definitely not on our side, but was not on the side of the admin, either.

So it didn't work out well at all for them. After that, their strategy was to try to redirect people to official committees on campus. And we ignored that. Then we did a phone zap after they met with us. And the last action we did was an information picket. We had about thirty-plus people. It was a really rainy and dark day, and because of the weather, the turnout wasn't the best. But it showed that we were not going to give up and they couldn't co-opt us. So they decided it would be easier to give in.

Say a little more about the value of having a union that works democratically. Why is that helpful?
Why that works really well is because, one, it would be much harder to make decisions that screw over other members of the union. It means that everyone who's in the union has a say in what happens. Also, when the boss tries to negotiate, and tries to get people to decide for the union, that's just talking to one person. And one person does not have the power to make those decisions. It's the union, when they meet together. That's where decisions are made. So it tends to be much harder to shut the union down.

What did you win?
Instead of not having a cop hired, they essentially asked a cop to leave, which in most situations means they fired that cop. Evergreen police are used against protests that happen in Olympia in general. Olympia PD has something called a "mutual aid pact," appropriating that term from leftists. It means they'll call in all the cops from the local area to come assist them if there's a protest in downtown or whatever. So having one less cop that can partake in that is huge.

Not only that, but they're going to hire a full-time political economy faculty member. They only went half-way with one of our demands, which was the arts faculty demand. They're hiring someone in community media, which is general arts, and only a part-time position. It wasn't fully what we wanted, but that's a huge victory ●

A Marker for Covington Hall

by Steve Rossignol



Covington Hall's angst for the plight of the lumber workers is reflected in this postcard to Tom Hickey.

William Covington Hall stands out in southern socialist and labor history as one of the paramount organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World in Texas and Louisiana. Writer, poet, labor organizer, orator, newspaper editor — Covington Hall is perhaps best remembered for his efforts to organize lumber workers in the East Texas and Western Louisiana piney woods in the first two decades of the 20th Century.

But for all his notoriety during those years, Covington Hall died in relative obscurity on February 21, 1952. For the longest time, the location of his gravesite was unknown and unmarked.[1] It was time to resolve the oversight.

A biography of Covington Hall cannot be done in a few short paragraphs. Covami, as he called himself in his writings, was born in Woodville, Mississippi, on August 15, 1871, the son of a Presbyterian minister. His sense of justice for working people quickly developed and he became entrenched in the unionization efforts of the Texas and Louisiana lumber workers, so much so that the lumber industry once tried to have him killed.[2] Following his efforts to organize the IWW and the Brotherhood of Timber Workers in the South, he continued his efforts with the IWW unionization efforts in Oregon, and later became actively involved with the New Llano socialist colony near Leesville, Louisiana, and then later with the efforts of Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas. His main written work was Labor Struggles in the Deep South, but his newspaper articles were extensive, especially in the pages of the Socialist Party of Texas paper, *The Rebel*, and his own newspapers, *The Lumberjack* and *Voice of the People*. His poetry also appeared in the pages of those papers, as well as in a variety of chapbooks.

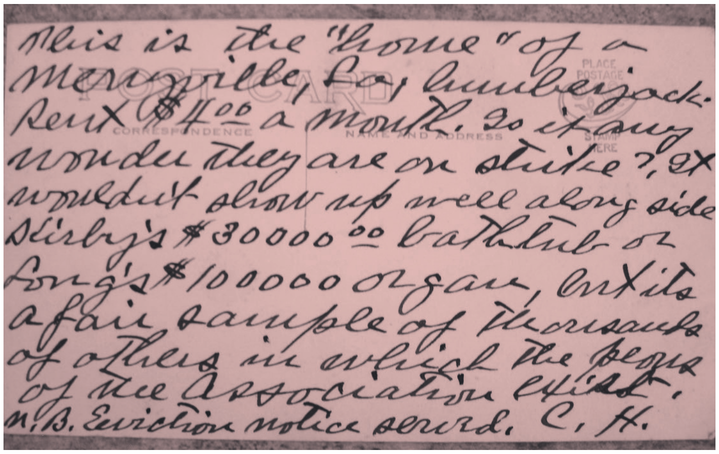
The effort to track down the mysterious location of Covington Hall's final resting place started in 2017 with a random internet search, whereupon it was discovered, via Find-A-Grave[3], that he was buried in Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans. This was confirmed by obtaining a copy of his death certificate from the Louisiana Secretary of State[4]. Unfortunately, Find-A-Grave did not provide a photo of the gravesite, which prompted a visit to the Metairie Cemetery to obtain an exact location of William Covington Hall's burial location.

But, alas and alack, the location of the crypt provided by the cemetery folks as the burial location for Covington Hall did not have any marker, inscription, or mention indicating that Covami was indeed interred there. There were Halls in that crypt, including a William A. Hall who was presumably Covington's father, but nothing else.

Covington Hall needed to be memorialized with a little bit more. The quest to get a marker installed for him began in earnest. An *ad hoc* email group of interested Wobblies began entertaining the best ideas.

There were initial issues to be resolved. Metairie Cemetery was approached with an inquiry as to the possibilities and requirements for installing a marker, but since Metairie was a private cemetery, the owners of the cemetery plot would have to be contacted for

[1] *See, for instance, Nick Lemann, "In Search of Covington Hall", Harvard Crimson, October 23, 1975*
[2] *"Burns Detectives Arrested", The Rebel, Vol. 2, No. 79, January 11, 1913, p. 1.*
[3] *https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/134587502/covington-hall*
[4] *State of Louisiana Certificate of Death, Orleans Parish, p. 1134*


This is the "home" of a Merryville, La, lumberjack. Rent $4.00 a month. Is it any wonder they are on strike?, It wouldn't show up well along side Kirby's $30000.00 bathtub or Long's $100000 organ, but it's a fair sample of thousands of others in which the peons of the Association exist. N.B. Eviction notice served. C. H.

Tom Hickey Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

their approval for an addition to the crypt. No such current heir could be located — the ownership bloodline had faded away over the years; after all, Covington Hall's burial in 1952 — over sixty-five years ago — had probably been the last internment in that particular crypt. Metairie Cemetery was tasked with the maintenance of monuments, but they in no way were permitted to alter the existing memorials.

After some further discussions on this, the General Manager of Metairie Cemetery, Mr. Huey Campbell, came to the rescue: "I have met with our interment department and management team and we will approve a separate marker to be placed on the stairs of the Hall Family Tomb which will allow you to [memorialize] Mr. William Covington Hall."[5]



The marker for Covington Hall. "Organizer. Poet. Writer. Teacher and Stalwart Defender of Working People. 'I am weary though the goal for which we battled is in sight'". Photo by the author.

The Covington Hall Ad Hoc Marker Committee was back in session. Text was approved for the marker, bids were solicited from various monument manufacturers, and an appeal was made through the crowdfunding website GoFundMe to raise the necessary funds. On December 13, 2018, the manufacturing order was placed with Covington Monument Company in Covington, Louisiana. The marker was installed on April 25, 2019.

The marker for William Covington Hall is at Metairie Cemetery, 5100 Pontchartrain Blvd., New Orleans, Section 18, plots 21 and 22. When you drop by, bring a red rose.

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed to the successful completion of this memorial project for Covington Hall. ●

Steve Rossignol is a retired member of IBEW Local 520, Austin, Texas and a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. He serves as Archivist for the Socialist Party USA

[5] Email from Huey Campbell to Steve Rossignol, August 3, 2018

An Interview with Heather Mayer

Originally published in the July/August 2019 issue of the Seattle Worker. Find the latest issue of the Seattle Worker at: https://seattleiww.org/seattle-worker

by Hannah Hopkins

Heather Mayer is an instructor of History at Portland Community College and a scholar of American social justice movements. She received a PhD from Simon Fraser University. Her book *Beyond the Rebel Girl: Women and the Industrial Workers of the World in the Pacific Northwest, 1905 — 1924*, published by Oregon State University Press in 2018, attracted the attention of union supporters across the country. She agreed to do a short interview with me by email.

What is the one main takeaway you want readers to get from *Beyond the Rebel Girl*?

The community of radicals and people connected to the IWW in the Northwest in the early twentieth century included more than just single, male itinerant workers. Women, children, and husband-and-wife organizing teams all played an integral role in the Wobblies' success. And that activism wasn't always as big and visible as a leading a free speech fight or a strike. There were a lot of ways to support the union that were much smaller but still vitally important.

What made the IWW different, and why were so many women involved and prominent members in the early twentieth century?

While women still made up a small percentage of membership in the northwest, there were a few things that I think drew them to the IWW in this period: first, that they had freedom to focus on issues that interested them, such as birth control, antiwar activism, and freedom from restrictive middle class ideals about sex and marriage, in addition to workplace issues of wages, hours, and conditions. Second, that it was an avenue for activism that did not focus primarily on getting women the right to vote.While the Wobblies weren't against women's suffrage, they focused more on direct action than political activism. These were women who saw that they had more in common with working class men than with upper class women.

What do you think of the state of the IWW these days especially with regards to women?

I think people are fond of the Wobblies because, unlike other unions in the early twentieth century, they advocated organizing all workers, regardless of sex, race, or skill. But not being exclusive is not exactly the same as being inclusive. The Wobblies of the early twentieth century lamented the lack of female membership, but didn't examine the structures or practices that made it sometimes difficult for women to join and take part. From an outsider's perspective, I think the Wobblies of today do a much better job of actually being inclusive and understanding the needs of a variety of workers, but there's always more work that can be done.

What other books by women do you see as invaluable to anyone trying to rebuild a radical labor movement here in the US?

Two recent ones I would recommend are Lane Windham's *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970's and The Roots of a New Economic Divide* and Annelise Orleck's *"We Are All FastFood Workers Now": The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages*. Although not a book, I'm really enjoying the articles by Kim Kelly (@grimkim) in Teen Vogue and other places.

Obituary

We regret to inform you that Fellow Worker Lowell May of the Bread and Roses Workers' Cultural Center has passed away of natural causes. A memorial gathering was held on Sunday, March 24, 2019.



Bread and Roses Workers Cultural Center

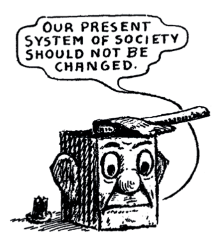
www.workersbreadandroses.org

COMICS


Leftist Comics
"Sabo - Cat"
You'll have to admit defeat now, Syndi-cat! I've outmaneuvered you on all fronts!
Oh dear, I guess you leave me no choice.
What?
Well, I can't officially endorse what's about to happen, but I'll have you know you brought this upon yourself.
Meet Sabo-Cat.
Mew.
That's Sabo-cat? It's tiny!
Have fun.
Mew.
So, what's your secret? Are you hiding dynamite under your fur?
Whoops, I "accidentally" dropped a wrench into one of your very expensive machines! Clumsy me!
Yow! My pocketbook! You fiend!
That's what you get for exploiting your workers, capitalist pig!
X389468


Leftist Comics
"Seeing Another Wobbly While At Work"
Work sucks. Capitalism sucks. I want to go home.
sigh
Hey, Fellow Worker!
Hi, it's great to see you!
Work sucks. Capitalism sucks. I'm going to organize my workplace!
X389468


Leftist Comics
"Syndi-Cat Lending Aid"
Hey, one of our fellow workers is asking for our help! Everyone, get out your red cards!
Let's Organize!
POOF!
Get out of there, or I'll call the police!
I'll only come out when I'm dead!
OFFICE
Well, what seems to be the problem here?
One of your anarchistic friends has locked me out of my office!
That's right. And he thinks the police will get me out.
OFFICE
Well, they won't. They can't arrest me - the One Big Union doesn't fit in jail.
Ha! What do you say to that, Mr. Exploiter?
OFFICE
Goddamnit.
X389468


OUR PRESENT SYSTEM OF SOCIETY SHOULD NOT BE CHANGED.

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Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

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